



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **CHILD CARE TRANSPORTATION CRACKDOWN KICKS OFF** *INSPECTORS WORKING TO KEEP KIDS SAFE THIS SUMMER*

NASHVILLE-- Tennessee Department of Human Services child care licensing inspectors are hitting the streets this summer, making sure children are safe. The annual summer transportation crackdown is a reminder to providers that DHS is watching them. Inspectors will be making unannounced visits and conducting surveillance at child care agencies that offer summer transportation to ensure agencies are following regulations to protect children during the hot summer months and all year round.

"We can't take any chances when it comes to the health and safety of Tennessee's children," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "The inspection process and stepped up enforcement is necessary. It works both to identify problems and prevent potential tragedies."

Child care licensing staff conducted nearly 600 visits during June, July and mid-August of 2005. More than 100 agencies were "Put on Notice" after inspectors found violations that ranged from broken seatbelts to incomplete logs to no transportation training. Eight agencies voluntarily suspended their licenses to transport due to critical violations. One center left a child behind and alone at the center after the rest of the children were taken on a field trip. Many agencies also had problems with their logs. Accurate logs help ensure that providers know exactly where all of the children are and that all of the children are off the van or bus.

Since 1997, four Memphis children have died after being forgotten in hot child care vans. A Shelby County baby died in 2004 and a Nashville child died in 2003 after they were left in their parents' vehicles in front of their child care centers. Sunburn and dehydration are the most common risks of briefly leaving a child in a vehicle in the hot summer heat. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle during hot weather can rise over 107 degrees within minutes. Children left inside can suffer heatstroke, brain damage and death.

Human Services licenses 3,700 child care agencies in Tennessee, and 22 percent of these offer transportation. There are more than 300 agencies in Memphis that transport, 80 in Knoxville and Nashville and 20 in Hamilton County. The rest of the child care agencies that transport are spread out across the state. While some agencies only transport during the school year, others offer this service year-round. These are the agencies that will be under DHS scrutiny this summer.

If you witness a child being left unattended or if there are child care vans or buses on the roads driving in an unsafe manner, dial 9-1-1 for immediate assistance. For other transportation safety violations please call the Human Services Child Care Complaint Hotline at 1-800-462-8261. This number is posted on every licensed child care agency van or bus. For more information on child care licensing, visit: <http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/childcare.htm>.

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